

Josep E. Rubio, *Raymond Lulle: le langage et la raison. Une introduction à la genèse de l'Ars*, «Conférences Pierre Abélard», Paris, Vrin, 2017, 140 p., ISBN: 978-2-7116-2714-1.

The book under review consists of four chapters, each divided into subsections, chapters preceded by a list of abbreviations pertinent to Ramon Llull's oeuvre, together with a brief preface, and is followed by a short bibliography and a table of contents. The chapters, respectively offer insights into: 1) The problematic relation between language and reality in Llull; 2) Reality as a sign and how the interplay of significations within Lullian epistemology finds itself formalised within the Lullian Art; 3) Contemplative reason/rational contemplation in the *Ars demonstrativa* (c. 1283; hereafter *AD*); and 4) The new «common language» of the Art as found in the *Introductoria Artis demonstrativae* (1283-85 ?; hereafter *Introd AD*), of which, for reasons of brevity, only certain elements are discussed below.¹

In the preface to this book, written as its title suggests in (excellent) French, this Valencian author presents the philosophy of language as the starting point for Llull's reflections upon the relations between reality, reason and linguistic expression. Josep E. Rubio asserts that such reflection, for Llull, served as the basis of the latter's «discovery» of the Art in response to the expressive challenges posed specifically by his vast early work, the *Llibre de contemplació en Déu* (1273-74 (?); hereafter *LC*) (p. 9). In order to contextualise this project, Rubio poses the question of how Llull's semiotic theory compares to the ideas under dispute within the philosophy of language during the period in which he was writing (p. 9-10; Ch. 1 *passim*). The explicit aim of Rubio's book is to present the underlying presuppositions of Llull's method of discovering the truth, i.e. his *ars inveniendi veritatem* or Art (p. 10), rather than to

1. For an admirably succinct summary of the set of (six) interlinked points constituting a large part of the overall thesis of this book, the reader should consult p. 113-114 therein.

give a detailed account thereof (as has already been done elsewhere by himself and others), and, moreover, subsequently to demonstrate that this «Art of finding truth» is itself based upon Lull's understanding —as well as methods— of contemplation: «La contemplation et la prière sont le fondement de l'art de trouver la vérité» (p. III).

In terms of Lullian scholarship, the use of a lens such as semiotics and the philosophy of language, whereby to focus upon, not least, processes of analogy and signification, though not entirely novel, remains a particularly apt approach to the study of certain medieval authors and, in particular, Ramon Llull. Previous authors in the field, such as Jordi Gayà, Mark D. Johnston and Joan Tusquets (all referenced by Rubio), to name but a few, have applied this kind of principle to good effect. It ought to be commented, nonetheless, that Rubio here has achieved particularly wide-ranging and productive results from the implementation of such a procedure, ably linking, through an analysis of the use of the key concepts of similitude and signification employed in Lullian «hermeneutics» (modern hermeneutics, at least, itself being a field which includes the study of both semiotics and presuppositions), the contemplative with the demonstrative dimensions of Llull's Art (p. 63ff. and *passim*). He thereby illustrates how Lullian semiotics exists for the sake of his epistemology (p. 23) and how hermeneutics serves as the basis of his *heuresis* or *inventio* (p. 53; 62–63).

In illustration of these latter points, we find useful and novel discussion (p. 30–67) of the various ways in which Llull confronts the limitations faced by (and inherent to) a) sensible linguistic expression (p. 30); b) the sensible available to the sign (p. 49) and, therefore, sensible linguistic expression in general (including *affatus*, a Lullian «sixth sense», for which see below) (p. 50); as well as by (and to) c) intellectual or spiritual knowledge itself (p. 63ff.). In the first two cases, such limitations consist in the possible occurrence of false significations and falsehoods or lies (p. 50), while, in the latter case, it is a question of the substance (or essence) of an object's being inaccessible to intellectual knowledge (p. 64). With respect to case a), recourse to intellectual significations provides a solution (p. 30). In case b), the Lullian correlatives (i.e. the dynamic and ternary unfolding of his onto-theo-logical principles) supercharge language and, in combination with the concept of *translatio/transumptio* (as employed by Llull), transcend the above limits regarding the expression of divine reality.² In case c), on the other hand, apperception (one of Llull's five «spiritual senses») —though here Rubio fails to note the importance of *cogitació*, likewise a spiritual sense— offers a partial

2. In addition, here, *affatus* (as I understand it, *oral* rather than merely *verbal* expression à la Rubio, p. 45) represents an attempt on Llull's part, in Rubio's view, to reduce the gap between sensible linguistic expression and intellectual thought (p. 46).

response thereto, as do similitudes, which, along with faith (p. 10; 51), the correct moral disposition of the Artist (p. 98-103; 108; 110; 118) and the mystical components of Llull's thought (p. 71; 92ff.; 114), all help to transcend such limits, the former by facilitating relative comparisons (via the principles of Figure T) (p. 67).³

As has at times been my own practice, Rubio employs what can only be called a «broad definition» of Llull's Art or Arts, namely, he subsumes both what, after the periodisations carried out by Anthony Bonner, has conventionally been called the «post-Art phase» of Lullian production (1308-1315) and what is known as the «pre-Art phase» (1271-74) under the general heading of the «Lullian Art(s)». He employs such on the understanding that both the former and the latter are so imbued with the characteristics of the «Art proper» (i.e., the Arts of the «Quaternary» and the «Ternary» phases dating from 1274-89 and 1290-1308, respectively), albeit in the latter case (i.e. particularly in *LC*) forming less of an organic ensemble, as to be in many respects indistinguishable therefrom (p. 54-63). In so doing, he is apt to stress the unity and continuity of Llull's Arts over and against any interpretations which might underemphasise these aspects or indeed stress a «ruptural» view (my term) of the shift from quaternary to ternary versions thereof (p. 56; 58).

Rubio boldly and explicitly states that the Art begins with *LC* (p. 54), though elucidates further, in his characterisation of the «Pre-Art phase», that this work in particular represents a «condensation *in nuce*» of Llull's subsequent oeuvre, rather than a preliminary way point to the full-blown generally known Lullian literary production (p. 59). It is on the above basis, then, that Rubio defines the essence of the Art in contemplative terms, that is to say, as the structured and systematic contemplation of the significations offered by the principles within the figures of the Art (p. 85), the (early) Art(s) thus consisting in a formalisation of contemplative praxis (p. 78). He also maintains that such a contemplative base persists throughout the subsequent evolution of the Art. The foregoing procedures, of course, operate in the service of the broader and primary goal of the expression and demonstration of the Christian articles of faith within an apologetic context (p. 85-86). However, in defining the Art in contemplative terms and contemplation in Artistic terms, that is to say, by defining each in terms of the other, Rubio risks producing a circular definition, unless one considers the two terms separately as signifying two different procedures,

3. It is in the context of the moral/psychological aspects of the early Arts that Rubio stresses the lasting significance of the almost omnipresent and complementary compartments [EAVY] [IVZ] therein, these compartments being indicated as the necessary investigative operations to be undertaken by the Artist (p. 101ff.).

each capable of shedding light upon the other, a separation which presumably the author would seek to avoid.

Nevertheless, through careful and thorough analysis of Ramon Llull's recourse to the semiotic and epistemological roles played by similitude and the interplay of significations within the real (i.e. the realms of both the sensible and the intelligible) as this latter is perceived hermeneutically by the human intellective soul during contemplation, a process strikingly evident in *LC* (cf. esp. p. 63-69), Rubio is able to demonstrate the manner in which all beings can signify all others by virtue of their mutual similitude. Such mutual signification takes place according to a logic of analogy aimed at facilitating knowledge as well as guaranteeing the truth of the Artist's discoveries concerning God, who is defined as and through (and contemplated in) his divine «Dignities» (or personal, convertible and essential attributes). The above-described processes all constitute, indeed, the very underpinnings and aims of the Art as viewed through a contemplative lens (p. 61; 78). Rubio then proceeds to show how Figure S of Llull's first Art, the *Ars compendiosa inveniendi veritatem* (c. 1274), a figure which sets out the combined acts of the human intellective soul (the Augustinian memory, intellect and will), like the other figures therein, has to be put into practice, which practice consists in the application thereof to the combinations of the principles from the other figures (chiefly, Figure A assisted by Figure T) (p. 83), from which process result certain «Conditions». These conditions consist in a kind of *topos* where the signification of the principles and the principles as combinations within the so-called «Second Figures» (p. 83-84) and themselves serve demonstrative purposes (p. 84).

Rubio then goes on to carry out an ingenious retrospective application of the mechanisms of the Art to a passage from Ch. 234 of *LC*, an application whereby such mechanisms are found already to be present in the earlier text, and thus he ably illustrates the fully «precursive» nature of *LC* itself with respect to the Art (p. 84, n. 1), revealing likewise how certain crucial conditions derive therefrom too.⁴ In comparison to *LC*, the Art «proper», in Rubio's view, involves the additional elements of a fully combinatorial procedure which lends thereto a supplementary organicism (p. 84, n. 1). The latter point, in fact, offers a way out from the aforementioned circularity.

Rubio's book reveals both a deep and broad familiarity with his primary sources and with secondary such. It is worth noting that, while at times drawing upon the work of recent scholars, Rubio is nevertheless able to carve out his own distinctive channel as regards not only the classifications and periodisations commonly assign-

4. Ramon Llull, *LC*, Ch. 234, § 19, ORL V, p. 78.

ned to the Lullian oeuvre (cf. p. 97) but also the overall construal of that oeuvre on the part of noteworthy authors, thereby presenting deeply original insights (*passim*). In many ways, Rubio's book strikes the measured tone of one seeking independently to give voice to certain previously underacknowledged or less fêted aspects of a marginal and, by virtue of his marginality, original and interesting medieval writer (p. 13-14). Rubio's quest to present a fresh, well-considered and holistic view of Llull's textual production leads as much towards innovative and acutely reasoned proposals (*passim*) as it does to arguments, tactfully expressed, which apply a broader perspective towards contemporary disagreements between scholars (e.g. p. 13, n. 1); the ready incorporation of helpful materials and acknowledgements of priority (e.g. p. 46; 120-22); attestation to and significant revision of well-established viewpoints (e.g. p. 54-55; 91-92); not to mention the endorsement of what have come to be commonplaces of Lullian scholarship (p. 56).⁵ Thus, for example, we find that Rubio consistently stresses the practical and missionary concerns of Llull over any speculative such (particularly as regards grammar as a subject of the *trivium* and its subsumption under —or «translation into»— the terms and principles of the Art, the analogy drawn by Llull between language learning and the acquisition of the Art and Rubio's own reading of the Art as a kind of «Übergrammar» constituting in itself an «alternative language» (p. 44-45; 115-116; 120-123)). Notably, both Charles Lohr and Anthony Bonner have already, in different ways, stressed the practical and pragmatic nature of Llull's writerly and existential *ars* (<https://www.scipedia.com/public/Lohr2011.pdf> and <https://www.scipedia.com/public/Bonner2011.pdf>), and the distinction between *inventio* and *demonstratio*, moreover, becomes broader and more forceful still in Rubio's hands, assuming as it does the form of an equation between *contemplatio* itself and *demonstratio*, an equation wherein *contemplatio* —guided by (*recta*) *intentio*, namely, the injunction to love the good and hate what is evil— in turn forms the very basis of *inventio*, and thus serves epistemological ends (p. 98-100).

Rubio also significantly challenges the received wisdom according to which Llull introduced the use of letter symbolism or alphabetical notation for combinatoric purposes, arguing that, in effect, he did so to facilitate the comprehensibility of his texts and thus to lend speed to the reading thereof while eliminating the possibility of error and ambiguity (p. 31-33). Rubio supports this claim by pointing to the fact that the chapters of *LC* wherein Llull first introduces this alphabetisation is, in fact,

5. In this latter instance, the view that, instead of elemental analogies being attributed upwardly to God, in the Ternary Phase of Llull's Art the elemental analogies disappear and the focus is upon a downward ternary deployment of divine similitudes or likenesses in creation: in other words, a metaphysical, rather than analogical, process occurs.

in no way concerned with the combination of letters/concepts (p. 32-33). On the basis that Llull's Art, being a common, rational method containing common elements (i.e. the contents of faith and the principles and conditions of the Arts) adopted by agreement, nevertheless requires an additional element to ensure its communicability, namely, a common language (p. 20; 22-23), Rubio argues that alphabetisation of this kind satisfies both such desiderata (p. 34).

The paradigm case of the perfect communication of intellectual significations, the ideal here being «un échange de signifiés intellectuels au delà des obstacles posés par les dictiones verbales», is customarily unavailable to humans, bound as they are, especially in apologetic terms, to resort to a descent to the sensory nature of language (p. 31), a condition which likewise obtains in the case of the «sensible figures» represented by alphabetical notation (p. 32ff.). Such perfect intellectual communication, however, is maximally available to the spiritual beings that are angels in the form of a *locutio angelorum* (p. 35). In my view, however, Rubio's characterisation of the foregoing as taking concrete form within Llull's conceptualisation of the close relations between language and reason and as «une sorte d'affinage du moyen sensible» (p. 35), perhaps does not go far enough in emphasising the exemplary role of angelic (internal) discourse in terms of its providing the model for human internal discourse, itself both a key component of Lullian *cogitació* (see above) —and, hence, contemplation— and a modality of supra-sensible communication given the *ordinatio ad alterum* of the discourses (see above) of the latter discourse.

Furthermore, in the context of pressing home the point, central to this book, that divine contemplation is an intrinsic part of the Art insofar as it consists in the application of the soul's powers to the divine Dignities, Rubio notes in Llull a further equation between contemplation itself and prayer (p. 109), an argument I would wholly endorse and an equivalence upon which Llull at all times insists, particularly, as Rubio shows, in the final distinction (Chs 315-365) of *LC*, wholly devoted, as it is, to prayer. On the evidence of Rubio's discussion, given that this particular section of *LC* most greatly resembles the future Art in terms of its use of alphabetical notation within the text (p. 110), one could say that there exists a transitive equivalence relation between the Art and prayer, namely, that if the Art is equivalent to contemplation and contemplation is equivalent to prayer, then the Art itself is equivalent to (a kind of)

6. I call *cogitació* «suprasensible» insofar as, being one of Llull's spiritual senses, it enjoys great proximity to and affinity with the intellect; cf. Robert D. Hughes, «*Oratio, Verbum, Sermo* and «Les paraules de sa pensa»: Internal Discourse in Ramon Llull (1271/1272-1290), its Sources, Implications and Applications», *Studia Lulliana* 57, 2017, p. 3-61.

prayer, a point I myself have been seeking to make in my own work. Moreover, the fact of such alphabetical notation's initial appearance in (Ch. 328 of) this text might also suggest that its introduction in certain ways responds to the exigencies of Lullian prayer itself.⁷ Here also, Rubio's emphasis on the fact that the moral rectitude of the Artist is essential to the discovery of truth (p. 110), along with his functional identification of the Lullian «first intention» (i.e. to know, love, honour and praise God) with contemplation per se, enables him to present forceful arguments (*pace* certain commentators) to the effect that Llull's method does not progress towards one that is purely logical at the expense of its contemplative dimensions (p. 111).

Throughout this work Rubio consistently draws helpful comparisons between Lullian thought and practice with those of his scholastic (and Arabic) contemporaries and forerunners. Two notable examples of the foregoing occur with respect to the writings of St Thomas Aquinas.⁸ Given that the arguments of both Aquinas and Llull support the same conclusions, such comparisons are, of course, instructive in terms of the contrasts they provide. In the first such instance, the extreme concision and compendiousness of Llull's response to the question of monopsychism differs greatly from Aquinas's own lengthy and exhaustive treatment of the same topic by recourse to authorities (p. 109). In the second, we see Llull abstract the demonstration of the unmoved first mover from its context of proving God's existence (*pace* Aquinas), for the purpose of showing that philosophical discourse itself—and indeed the discourse of any scientific or natural science—can be reduced to the same terms as the Art and that the latter is, in fact, capable of bearing the same demonstrative weight as the former, claims which Rubio then goes on to show how Llull fulfils (p. 126-28).⁹

Along with many other commendable features of this book, comparisons such as these, moreover, also serve the broader purpose of drawing in a more general readership to the extensive Lullian corpus beyond that of specialists already in the field.¹⁰

7. The same transitive equivalence relation exists between the aforementioned *contemplatio—inventio—demonstratio* triad, which fact itself might serve to reinforce arguments in support of the truth value Llull, at least, attaches to prayer and, hence, point towards the latter's demonstrativity.

8. Thomas Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus contra averroistas* (1270) and *Summa contra gentiles* (1259-65), respectively.

9. The first Lullian example is taken from his *AD*, ROL XXXII, p. 173-74. For Rubio's analysis of Llull's solution to this question, see the book under review, p. 105-108; the second example occurs in the *Introd AD*, MOG III, ii, p. 33 (p. 87), for analysis of which, see the book under review, p. 125ff.

10. The apologetic aims of the Lullian corpus in general, that is to say, of non-Artistic works as well, have been emphasised by Rubio since the time of his earliest writings on Llull, where he observes the presence of such aims even in the case of *LC*, a work which, he states, is addressed to a non-believing or doubting readership, despite the continual contemplation of the divinity therein, cf. Josep Enric Rubio Albarracín, *Literatura i doctrina al Llibre de contemplació de Ramon Llull. (Estudi formal i de continguts del primer volum)*, «Col·lecció Saviesa

This book, therefore, is to be recommended not only to students and scholars alike of Ramon Llull, but also to those interested in viewing the centrifugal force with which this Catalan medieval author extends the application of concepts from scholastic debates concerning the philosophy of language to the realms of medieval understandings of semiotics, epistemology and both internal and inter-religious Christian apologetics.

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Cristiana, 2», València, Editorial Saó, 1995, p. 31, 145. In the book here under review, moreover, he reiterates this point with regard to even the very details of a work of the Art such as *AD* and, by implication, to subsequent versions of the Art as well (p. 108).